Chapter 6: There Has Come to You a Convincing Proof

After bandaging my hands, she went back to return the pub's first aid kit. I took that as my cue to leave, but scarcely a minute passed before she caught me again.

"I'm Zainab," she said, stretching out her hand. "Can I get your name?"

Zainab. I cycled through every possible scenario.

She knows what I did, which means that she is going to expose my sins to the world. But why would she bandage my wounds?

To remove any doubt about whose reputation to trust in case I denied it. But would the pub also create doubts about her reputation in the first place?

She must be a distraction. Someone was sneaking up behind me. I knew the stories of queer immigrants who were killed, kidnapped, and smuggled for conversion therapy.[1] Someone knew what I was and was going to attack and brutalize me.

I swiveled my head, looking for signs of attackers, firmly grasping the knife in my pocket to make sure I was prepared. In the changing shadows, in every reflective surface, they were there, signs of imminent death that must be heeded. Of course, it was unlikely for most people to be at risk of an attack. The likelihood of being the target of a violent crime were unlikely compared to the likelihood of dying in a car crash. But that is what separates the people who survive from those who do not. That is what separates the people whose parents find their secrets from those whose secrets do not exist. Those who are always prepared for the worse-case

scenario avoid it or defend themselves when it appears.[2] This is doubly important for someone like me, for whom a momentary lapse will get me killed and much worse. It only took one error, like a virus on a device, or a hacked social media account, or a piece of user data that was leaked on the internet. It all created the possibility that someone somewhere could figure out what I was and make me regret my younger self's imperfect internet literacy for the remainder of my life.[3] One must not only fear everything they do not know. One must fear everything they do not know about everything they do not know.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

It was then that I remembered to take deep breaths, taking notice of her appearance. Her skin and ponytail gleamed under the streetlights, like copper and onyx. Her face had a regal structure, reinforced by the gold in her earrings and necklace. But this also did not clash with her nose piercing, mouth piercings, and bomber jacket. She did not neatly slot into my fears or preconceptions. A part of me could still imagine the worse-case scenario, but the rest of me felt intuitively that I was not supposed to be on constant high alert for an attack.

"I am fine," I said. "It has just been a while since I last talked to someone."

She lightly shook my bandaged hand with a look of concern. I noticed henna artwork across her fingers.

"Do you need an ambulance, or water, or anything?" she inquired.

"No, thank you." I was more than used to slicing my skin.

I took that as my cue to end the conversation, but she walked with me, easily matching my strides.

"You have an interesting jacket," she said, making small talk.

"I got it from my dad," I mumbled.

"Where you heading to?" she asked, jumping over the awkwardness.

"The hospital."

"Good. It's best to get your hands checked as soon as possible."

"It is for something else." The last time I went to a doctor was probably around ten years ago.

She raised her eyebrows.

"What happened?"

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"*Astaghfirullāh*," He cursed through a fit of coughing.

I spat out the blood filling my mouth. Another tooth went out.

"I thought you would agree with me," I said sarcastically. "At least then you would not have had to deal with your 'stupid idiot' wife and son. When I was younger, I believed she was the problem. If she just disappeared forever and stopped making you angry, all our problems would go away. That is how much you turned me against her. I should have known the same was true about you too."

This left Him speechless, no longer knowing who He was talking to anymore.

We both stood up, facing each other, expecting a real bout.

"Your nearest brothers live four hundred kilometers away from you," I continued. "That is no accident. Clearly, their lives are better without you in it. Always angry. Always arrogant. Always believing that being the eldest brother made everyone else your property."

This speculation was so out of left field that He snickered.

"What do you know about my relationship with my brothers?"

"Do not pretend to be calm and rational," I spat. "I know what you really are. I am the

one was forced to take their place. I am the one who was forced to always walk on eggshells waiting for your next tantrum. I am the one who knows you should have never had a family."

"*Astaghfirullāh*!" He cursed again. "I did not teach you to listen to *waswas*!"

"*Waqaḍā rabbuka allā taʿbudū illā iyyāhu*," He recited. "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. *Wabil-wālidayni iḥ'sānan*. And that you be dutiful to your parents. *Immā yablughanna ʿindaka l-kibara aḥaduhumā aw kilāhumā*. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life. *Falā taqul lahumā uffin*. Do not say so much as 'uff' to them. *Walā tanharhumā waqul lahumā qawlan karīman*. Nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. *Wa-kh'fiḍ lahumā janāḥa l-dhul-li mina l-raḥmati*," He continued. "And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy. *Waqul rabbi r'ḥamhumā kamā rabbayānī ṣaghīran*. And say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on both of them as they brought me up when I was small.'"[4]

He was going to regurgitate His hour-long lecture about how 'uff' is a thing people say when they are annoyed or frustrated, indicating that I cannot be annoyed and frustrated with Him. He was going to regurgitate His two-hour-long lecture about how we are commanded to be dutiful to our parents right after we are commanded to worship God alone, indicating that filial piety (though He would not describe it as such) is so important in Islam that it is second only to belief itself. He was going to regurgitate His three-hour-long lecture about how He recites *Rabbi r'ḥamhumā kamā rabbayānī ṣaghīran* (My Lord! Have mercy on both of them as they brought me up when I was small) every night as a *duʿāʾ* for His own parents and wants me and my children (a major presumption) to continue the practice. When I was younger, I respected His judgement and integrity enough to endure these multi-hour-long lectures and take it to heart.

I clicked my tongue.

"Who cares? None of it matters anymore. Our kind does not even deserve to go to

heaven."

He clicked His tongue at the insanity He was hearing.

"What is wrong with you?" He spat. "I'm trying to explain these beautiful verses of the *Qurʾān*, and you give me this stupid shit? What is the point of this?"

"The point is you do not matter," I said. "You never mattered. You never deserved to be happy. You are a worthless failure who came from a worthless people."

I knew what this racist derision implied about myself.

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I did not say anything, too busy bearing my splitting skull.

Regardless, Zainab kept following me, chatting away like we were buddies. She talked about the weather, asked how I was not dying in my leather coat, elaborated on the proper etiquette when going to bars, and other subjects I found difficult to pay attention to.

The changing shadows grew restless, like a mass of anger demanding my attention. With every flicker of the streetlights, they warped into new forms, and even though I knew there was no imminent attack, knives and skulls and skeletal figures formed out of the darkness.

"Wretched parasite," the shadows reminded me. "You will be her downfall, just as you were the downfall of everyone who ever loved you."

"Why are you following me?" I asked her.

"There were only a couple minutes left in the game, so I wasn't going to miss anything. Besides, you seem like an interesting conversation partner."

"How easy you are to trick," the shadows responded. "Who would be interested in a deranged freak that cannot even keep a job?"

The wind howled, and the shadows laughed, growing longer and bolder and crueller.

From their skulls grew sharp teeth as long nails sprouted out from skeletal hands and legs. Some of them looked like people, and others looked like beasts. Clinking chains and metallic plates followed their every move, and smoke steamed from the metal, refracting the light. Then the shadowy figures changed even more, resembling monstrous machines impossible to comprehend. Their malevolence took on ever crueller forms anathema to all life. While their eyes could not be seen, they certainly peered into my every move, as untiring as the *jinn* and *shayāṭīn*. I reminded myself that they were nothing more than the delusions of an isolated mind. After all, how much *bidʿa* exists because of Muslims who let their superstitions trump the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* and "authentic" *ḥādīth*. But I could never completely remove all doubts.

"Will someone notice you are gone?" I asked Zainab.

"I'm sure everyone will survive without my gay star power," she said sarcastically.

Was she testing how I would react?

The queer Muslims I read about were not nearly as paranoid as me, so this level of testing might be within their comfort zone. After decades of making sure that secret did not exist, I do not think it was possible for me to say those words anymore. The words would not form. A wall in my mind killed off all thoughts of trust and authenticity.

I still believed the alternative was far worse. I knew how she worked. She was practically a newborn child, completely incapable of functioning in this world. I was also incapable of functioning, but she was even less capable, not even bound by a sense of duty and morality. Without this wall, she would have prioritized her desperation for love, happiness, and guidance. She was desperate for a real friend she could trust. She was desperate for a real parent who could love and nurture her. She was desperate for someone who could fill the void in our heart who she could love authentically.

She was a parasite.

In the time it took for me to consider whether I should end this conversation, Zainab moved onto the next topic, asking me where I came from. I told her that my parents were from Bangladesh, and she said a bunch of words I did not understand. I told her I did not know His language, and she apologized, though I reminded her that she should take pride in her dedication. I have nobody to blame but myself.

I then asked her why she learned Bengali, and she told me she had a passion for languages, listing several she was practicing while working on her Masters in Women and Gender Studies. I met some postgrad students in my last year of political science, but I quickly realized I was a fraud soon after. Their understanding of high-level theory was far beyond my own. I know of the concept of imposter syndrome, but this did not diminish the sense that I was a useless hack, which was eventually confirmed by the labour market. Besides, I was already suicidal during my undergraduate years, though I had things under complete control. Graduate school would have killed me if I tried it. Imagine going deeper into debt for the opportunity to become more suicidal.

Zainab discussed the queer and feminist literature enveloping her life as if I was a colleague, so most of it passed over my head. When people talk about things I do not know, it reminds me that I am stupid, so I tend to shut up and feign comprehension. When she noticed my shut lips and nodding head, she asked me about anything I read.

I scrambled for a related book to talk about. I did not want to go back to the *latatūna l-rijāla shahwatan min-dūni l-nisāʾ* minefield, but I could not recall anything else. My stressed mind blended all the queer Muslim memoirs into an incomprehensible mess of anecdotes. But I then remembered a book that might fit Zainab's expertise: Cynthia Weber's 2016 *Queer*

International Relations. Weber relies on queer scholarship concepts from Michel Foucault,[5] Donna Haraway, Judith Butler,[6] Richard Ashley,[7] and Roland Barthes,[8] so it was far beyond my understanding. But it seemed complex enough to convince Zainab that I was not a stupid, worthless hack, so long as I recalled it properly.

Weber relies on feminist, queer, and post-structuralist International Relations scholarship, all of which is a bit difficult to grasp intuitively.[9] I understood feminist and queer scholarship through analogies, imagining gender and sexuality as akin to the forests and oceans: diverse and beautiful, but also a source of fear. This leads societies to learn about and control these aspects of life, which ends up cutting down trees and people. A forest can be transformed into a parking lot and gay activists can be transformed into jingoist patriots.[10] Queer and feminist scholarship articulated the rigid societal logics controlling gender and sexuality, how queer subjectivities (a fancy word for queer people) defy that logic, and how societies try to control these queer subjectivities by producing "knowledge" that categorizes people according to what is considered sexually normative and perverted (called gendered/sexualized subjectivities).[11]

Zainab said she liked my analogy but reminded me that it should not portray a strict binary between nature/freedom/diversity and civilization/control/repression. Rigid binary thinking is also part of the societal logic questioned by queer scholarship. I suppose that was an error in my comprehension.

Post-structuralist International Relations focuses on how our understanding of sovereignty and anarchy represents it with fictional men (called statecraft as mancraft) who embody certain people, states, nations, and regions.[12] For "Arabia," we might imagine the balaclava-wearing terrorist nephew of an oil baron, so we associate "Arabia" with chaos. Discourse (academia, law, news, and media) constantly imagines certain types of people/things

as sovereign or anarchic by constructing these men (called sovereign subjectivities),[13] which creates political consensus around who does not have a right to live and who has a right to carry out the execution.[14] This is how one weaponizes the collective human spirit.

Queer International Relations recognizes how sovereign subjectivities rely on and reinforce sexualized subjectivities.[15] Sovereignty is associated with gender/sexual normativity and anarchy is associated with gender/sexual perversion,[16] and then applied against states, nations, people, and regions. This causes rigid societal logics around gender and sexuality to uphold the power relations governing international politics. But it also means that queer people not only challenge rigid societal logics, but the power relations governing the international system as well (called queer logics of statecraft).[17]

Weber demonstrated this by connecting modern discourse on political development to Victorian theories on the development of homosexuals. Back then, homosexuality was theorized as an underdevelopment of the mind and/or body requiring coercive "help" to "mature" into heterosexuality.[18] Modern theories on political development likewise present certain societies as underdeveloped and thus in need of coercive "help" to "mature" into developed ones.[19] Theorists like Sigmund Freud, Talcott Parsons, and Gabriel Parsons explicitly linked sexuality to civilizational development. Freud theorized that homosexuality was a sign that "the Orient," was as temporally distant from modern Europe as the ancient Greeks.[20] Parsons theorized that societal development resembled biological evolution such that the raising of children was the ultimate measure of survival. The "fittest" societies presumptively raise children in cisgendered, heterosexual, monogamous families governed by rigid gender roles.[21] Almond extends this logic to the development of political systems, theorizing that "traditional" societies modernize into modern European/American systems in-part by establishing the modern cis hetero nuclear

family.[22]

While changes in sexual morality mean that societies are no longer considered "backwards" for being gay, development discourse remains indebted to this nineteenth century logic.[23] Perhaps that is why Western discourse connected conflict minerals and warlords to increased rates of sexual assault in Eastern Congo, generating new perceptions of sexual perversion and thus perceptions of anarchy in need of coercive developmental "help."[24]

This is also where Western attitudes towards immigration and terrorism derive. Immigrants are regarded as vectors for transmitting backwards (anarchic/perverted) cultures, reinforced with discourse portraying immigrant cultures as sexually backwards/perverted.[25] They can be "cured" of their backwardness (anarchy/perversion) through assimilation into Western culture and free-market capitalism (order/normativity).[26] But those who do not/cannot assimilate represent terrorist threats[27] in the same way homosexuals who refused to be "cured" threatened heteronormative Victorian society.[28]

This led me to end all identification with this country. Its progressivism must be conditional upon one's ability to embody a close approximation of what was always orderly/normative in this country. A real Canadian is independent, able-bodied, married (-ish), bourgeois, white (-ish), Christian (-ish), assimilated/patriotic, and affirming of national and economic interests. This must be how this country integrated the rights of queer people,[29] women, and minorities.[30] Inclusion is based on how well they approximate "Canadian-ness," whether it be economic/educational overachievement, military service, or abandonment of their foreign cultures.[31] Indigenous and foreign peoples however are "incurably" anarchic/perverse. Hence why this country continues to attempt genocide,[32] assimilation,[33] dispossession,[34] impoverishment,[35] and violence[36] against First Nations. Hence why this country and its

universities help disfigure the sacred mountains of the Native Hawaiians for the sake of astronomy facilities.[37] Hence why this country and its mining corporations help mercenaries inflict brutality upon anti-mining/labour activists at the American Dakota Access Pipeline, the Guatemalan Escobal Mine, the Dominican Pueblo Viejo Mine, the Chilean Pascua Lama Mine, and many more across the Americas.[38]

Zainab grimaced when I articulated this, reminding me that *LGBT+* rights are not fundamentally racist or neoliberal.[39] *LGBT* people do not have to reinforce systems of power, nor is it intended when they do support *LGBT* rights.[40] The progress made in Canada should not be discounted as some Faustian bargain necessitating assimilation and annihilation, nor should it be used to regard *LGBT* people as symbols of Westernization (Western countries also oppress *LGBT* people).[41] I suppose my nihilistic worldview influenced my perceptions. I still do not identify with this country.

Zainab however was not familiar with Indigenous politics in Hawai‘i. I guess that is a benefit of studying political science. I understood Hawai‘i’s relationship with America as akin to Crimea’s relationship with Russia. In both cases, a region with a temperate climate in a strategic location[42] was conquered by an imperial power in the nineteenth century and became a site for militarism, tourism, and military tourism.[43] In both cases, this colonialism is swept under the rug by attempts to force the region’s naturalization into the imperial nation, which requires the assimilation and removal of the Indigenous Nation. In Crimea, this is the Crimean Tatars, who are now a minority in Crimea due to Tsarist and Soviet deportations alongside Slavic colonization. In Hawai‘i, this is the *Kānaka Maoli* (full-blooded Hawaiians), who are now a minority in Hawai‘i due to old-world diseases, colonization, and the rising costs of living.[44]

A part of me once wondered what it would be like to witness the night sky above *Mauna*

Kea (White Mountain). I never saw a clear night sky before, having lived in this city my entire life. But I did not want the nagging feeling in the back of my head reminding me that I was the same as the imperial astronomers ands tourists funding the expensive hotels dotting *Waikīkī*.[45] Only by doing something to significantly support the blockade on the Mauna Kea Access Road[46] would I be allowed to witness the majesty of God's creation.

But that dream was impossible. I was nothing more than a burden full of self-loathing and a brown Canadian version of white saviorism. What skills do I have anyways in my mind's shattered state? What experience did I have anyways besides thousands of hours mowing, watering, raking, and collecting lost golf balls? My aspirational downsizing should have just brought me to a ditch.

Zainab must have noticed the gloom on my face because she changed topics to talk about interesting places she travelled with her friends. I felt like I was in my last years of life, so I hated the stress of travel. When I heard and read about how these people worked multiple jobs, studied, engaged in activism, and hung out with friends, while still being full of youthful exuberance, I decided that we were separate species. That must be how they had twice the time and energy as me.

"Everyone should visit Kolkata," she exclaimed. "It can be a bit congested to say the least, but the book market on college street is one of the biggest you will ever see. Stacks of books line the sidewalks and fill up every inch of space. Since there is so much scaffolding, you will sometimes see books hanging from a clothesline tied to the pipes."

This chaotic market sounds nothing like the silent concrete castle I spent so many days holed up in. A part of me was tempted by the idea of books, but the paranoia and overstimulation that would accompany me while navigating an Indian market left me hesitant. Surely, there is not

a racist aspect to my hesitation. Surely?

"Of course, a lot of them are what you expect," she continued. "Physics textbooks, chemistry textbooks, medicine textbooks, engineering textbooks, SAT prep books, occasionally the biography of an American billionaire–all the things a helicopter parent needs to prepare their kid for the career planned out for them. But you might find a rare book that does not exist anywhere else in the world. Our friend group made a bet to see who could get the rarest and cheapest books, so we spent all day scouring the place, haggling like the locals."

When I was younger, I was often told it is *ḥarām* to makes bets. The *Qurʾān* forbids gambling,[47] but people often chastised me and other kids when we said innocuous rhetorical phrases like "My luck is so bad I bet it will stop raining the moment I get out of this storm" or "how much would you bet that you will get an A on the test?" or "ten bucks to whoever reaches the bus first." If I recall, these rhetorical phrases were criticized for making predictions on the future (which is within God's exclusive dominion) and for resembling the format of gambling.

"We were there all day, so you can bet we visited the coffeehouses to down tons of *Kabiraji* (Indian deep-fried cutlet of fish, chicken, or mutton)."

Did they check the ingredients and preparation process of everything they ate? Perhaps they just ate fish and veggies, and perhaps none of the chefs contaminated their dishes with utensils that cooked *ḥarām* food. Do Indian Muslims have to fear accidentally eating vegetables consecrated to a Hindu god? I do not think so, but I do not know enough about Hinduism to have an opinion on that matter.

A strained chuckle escaped my lips, but Zainab seemed to have interpreted it differently.

"You got to visit it sometime. We visited for *Dīpāvalī* (the Hindu festival of lights) but our addiction to college street was so intense that we barely had any time for *Kālī Pūjā* (a festival

dedicated to the Hindu goddess of death, *Kālī*)."

"I did not know you were a Hindu."

"No," she said, cocking her head. "I am Muslim."

"I see."

"Is that a problem?" she asked, noticing my tone of voice.

I guess a Muslim could attend *Diwali* without engaging in the religious aspects. I suppose one could treat it like art and separate the culture from the cult (in the non-pejorative sense). After all, interfaith dialogue beats the chauvinist violence plaguing India right now.[48]

"No, no, I am just surprised," I answered. "It is just not what I am used to, I guess. Your parents did not give you any shit about this?"

"They were already giving me shit for being gay," she replied. "Hindu friends were just the cherry on top."

I was always told to be extremely careful about who I make friends with because friends are the people one most often emulates. I did not have any friends, but that instruction still maintained the emotional wall separating me from all human beings.

"Did they hurt you?" I ask.

"Hurt me?"

"Yeah, like, physically."

"Oh no, they didn't do that. But they would want me to stand up by myself when they're gone, and to do that, I can't deny key parts of my life to do whatever they say."

I let out a strained chuckled.

"Ah, so they will approve when they realize that this was all for the best, huh?"

"Is that funny to you?"

"It just seems like such a different way of viewing things."

"How come?" she requested, suspicious of my tone.

"It just seems so risky. What would you do if they ended up in a car crash or suffer a heart attack?"

"*Allāh yastur* (May God protect us)," she muttered. This sudden invocation of God made me click my tongue instinctually.

"I'm not sure," she admitted after giving it some time to think. "But I would react better now than I would if I just did everything they said."

"Really?"

"Really. I wouldn't have my friends. I wouldn't have my girlfriend. I wouldn't understand myself. I would be entirely reliant on them to tell me what to do, so if they suffered a heart attack, that version of me would have no idea how to process it and be there for them."

I clicked my tongue intentionally.

"But if you were obeying them, you would be physically there for them."

Her head tilted to the side, as if trying to figure out if she heard me correctly.

"You can't say one way or the other," she insisted. "Maybe they would push me away even if I did everything they said. Maybe they will live much longer now that they can focus on their own lives. Maybe it would be the other way around. Or maybe things would be nothing at all like what I described. All these maybes are pointless. Only *Allāh*, *Subḥānahu wa Taʿālā* (exalted and glorified is He), knows the future for certain."

Pointless? With the lives of one's parents on the line? The invocation of God right after made me intentionally click my tongue.

"I thought the *Qurʾān* commands us to obey our parents."

"If your parents worshiped idols, you wouldn't say 'I must obey them, so I'll worship idols.' All the prophets had to disobey their parents and community to stand up for what was just."

I clicked my tongue once more.

"What was just? Do you think that is a bit arrogant?"

"Come on," she said, deflating now that she knew what I really was.

"If your faith depends on what you already consider just, are you not just confusing your own desires and beliefs with those of God's? When the *Qurʾān* criticized the people of Lot for approaching the men lustfully instead of the women, would it be a bit arrogant to prioritize our lowly, human interpretations of justice?"

"You're really going to spread homophobic talking points?" she asked incredulously.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"It would be nice if Muslims could go to pride rallies and protest anti-queer politics. But Islamic law is just not that flexible. Its very nature demands order, and on that fundamental level compels us to abandon our sense of right and wrong regardless of what queer scholarship says."

"Islamic law," she scoffed. "The love of *Allāh* isn't found in a man's lawbook," she exclaimed. "The *Qurʾān* preaches love,[49] it preaches justice,[50] it preaches accountability,[51] it preaches peace,[52] it preaches curiosity,[53] it preaches compassion,[54] it preaches charity,[55] it preaches equality.[56] It does not preach mindless slavery. If it did, *The Prophet* would have just done whatever his people wanted from him on the day he was told '*Iq'ra bi-s'mi rabbika lladhī khalaq*' (Read in the name of your Lord, who created)."[57]

I was confident she cherry picked the aspects of religion she liked.[58]

"You can always change religions if you want."

"I don't have to," she demanded. "I can pursue justice for queer people, Muslims, women, Indigenous people, black people, and everyone who suffers from oppression because that is what *The Prophet* did."

"If only things were so easy," the *shayāṭīn* cackled, though they did not reveal themselves. "Imagine how much simpler things would be if God gave *The Prophet* a case to overtly affirm the *mukhannath*, the *mutarajjila*, and those who commit the crime of the People of Lot. Imagine how much simpler things would be if God chose different words instead of *latatūna l-rijāla shahwatan min-dūni l-nisāʾ*. But alas, He did not."

"Sure, you can try that," I said. "Maybe the rest of the Muslim world will amend the *fiqh* to fit your interpretations of Islam."

"And you know why His God never made things simple," the *shayāṭīn* whispered. "He enjoys your suffering. How boring things would be if God unconditionally loved you. From the divine perspective, it is quite entertaining watching lowly humans squirm and suffer like roaches. Why else would the all-powerful allow the *ummah* to endure and commit genocide?"

"But that should happen after your parents have passed," I continued. "Until then, everything you do will convince them that they are on the path to hell. It does not matter if it is true or false, just that the things which make you happy make them unhappy. That is why they must hit you to grant you the right to prioritize your own happiness."

She stepped forward to block me.

"Look," she said, her face a stern scowl. "If you have a problem with me, just say it. But don't try to disguise your hate."

"Wha–what? I do not have a problem. It's just, uh … It's just."

It was then that I noticed how quick and shallow I was breathing. My shoulders and neck

were stiff too, tensed in anticipation of an attack. I lost my connection to my senses when thinking about these subjects, my entire being going into my skull to process lines of argumentation. The rest of me was rendered into a machine that did not know pain, pleasure, wisdom, or self-reflection, and it showed. I cursed myself for getting into this mess.

She continued to stare me down in silence, an immovable pillar daring me to look away.

"Do you have a problem or not?"

I did look away. I glanced upwards at the sky. It was filled with concrete clouds encasing the world, but obscured on the other side was a full moon peering into me. I saw the shadows cast by the faint moonlight, and one of the *shayāṭīn* took form.

It tsked at me while shaking its head.

"Just as predicted," it said. "You should have listened to us."

I then noticed another. It was longer and thinner, hugging the curb. "Too much baggage," it said.

"Projected his own sins onto others," added a third from behind.

"And pushed away those who reminded him of himself," finished a fourth.

"The greatest of losers," they all recited in unison.

"Destined to suffer alone, in this world and the next," they finished, several more adding their own voices.

The *jinn* and *shayāṭīn* laughed. Some of them roared and snorted like they heard the greatest joke in millennia. They enjoyed watching an insect squirm pointlessly against the forces propelling it to its death. A pathetic, worthless roach who hoped its sins and failures could be overturned with the snap of a finger. Soon, the roach would tire, its fate sealed. But they found the ambiguity between life and death so entertaining.

"Sorry," I said at last. "You probably made the right decision."

The problem was clear in my mind. Quarantine was the only way to prevent the disease destroying my brain from harming others. Sure, I knew how this disease worked, but that was not enough. All it took was a momentary distraction, a momentary lapse in self-reflection, the pressing of the right buttons, and all would go awry. Sure, there were extraneous factors making me prone to triggers, but the ambiguity could not be tolerated.

Her eyebrows raised slightly, but I sidestepped her before a response could be formulated.

She said something, but I paid it no mind, quickening my pace into a jog. When I remembered how much faster she was, I ran, faster and faster to remove the possibility of any alternatives.

"You hurt anything that gets close to you," the *shayāṭīn* said to console me. "It is just in your nature. At least you ended it before you ruined another person's life."

"No," someone cried.

Their voice was far off in the distance, but it was smooth and melodious, what one would imagine coming from the *malāʾika*. The angelic voice cut through the *shayāṭīn* like butter.

"Turn back before it's too late," she exclaimed.

I took a glance, but it was too late. A hundred meters separated me from the street corner where I first ran, but she was not there.

She was gone without a trace, as if she never existed at all.

"A hallucination," the *shayāṭīn* chortled. "Your *nafs* tried to convince you into believing your depravity was just. Truly pathetic."

"No," the distant voice answered. "She was real. Our bandages attest that she was here.

We must keep looking. She's just around a corner behind one of these buildings."

"What if his memories were invented fantasies?" the *shayāṭīn* answered. "How could he determine the distinction between truth and falsehood?"

"We were raised to doubt our senses and intuitions," she said. "We were raised to fear this world of suffering and sin. That is why we see hatred and doubt in every shadow. But we were never raised to invent entire memories from thin air."

At this, the *shayāṭīn* quieted down, the roach catching itself before it went down the drain.

"She spoke an undeniable truth that we cannot forget," she said. "Even if we refuse to believe in her, we must at least listen to what she said."

"An undeniable truth," the *shayāṭīn* repeated, their mouths curling into cruel grins, and as if summoned, that Memory bubbled up. A tangle of arms and legs, pushing and pulling. Venomous tongues spitting poison. Minds straining, straining, and straining, until something snapped to a degree beyond what one thought was possible.

I pushed that Memory down with all my might, the veins in my skull constricting like a garrote strangling my brain. I kept going, one foot after the other, and in the corners of my vision, the *shayāṭīn* grew into an endless murder of crows, following me while laughing all the way to the hospital.

Ch 6 Notes

[1] Note that fear of being kidnapped and forced into conversion therapy is not very rational for a second-generation immigrant. Conversion therapy for them is dependent upon how their socialization makes them easy to manipulate by family members who want conversion therapy. This is rational if one knows that they do not have the mental/emotional support and fortitude to resist such manipulation (hence why some may be closeted, suppressed, or separate this aspect of their lives from their family entirely), but it does not (as far as I am aware) make it rational to fear being randomly kidnapped and subjected to conversion therapy. People are risk-averse, so some may live in fear regardless.
As for queer first-generation immigrants/refugees, it seems that the degree to which they fear being attacked, murdered, and coerced into going back home for conversion therapy (through emotional manipulation and leveraging immigrant/refugee fears of legal and economic insecurity) is proportional to the power of their birth-family to infiltrate the country of immigration/asylum. See: reports on the life and death of Solaria/Eden Knight for an example of how it plays out: Nora Noralla, "Eden Knight's Death Is an All-Too Familiar Story for Transgender Saudis," *Dawn*, June 1, 2023, https://dawnmena.org/eden-knights-death-is-an-all-too-familiar-story-for-transgender-saudis/.; SocDoneLeft (@socdoneleft), "A timeline for Eden Knight," *Substack*, March 1, 2023, https://socdoneleft.substack.com/p/a-timeline-for-eden-knight.; n.a., "Eden Abduction Details," *Google Docs*, n.d., https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_5rYApA5p_Ty0oqhyMCUywkNqNegscPNeodcgukcVDQ/.
[2] Note that some might disagree with this sentiment, and some might consider this practically infeasible.
[3] Note that victims of sextortion can get help from law enforcement, though I'm not sure if they have a policy for helping people with queer double-lives. Regardless, a victim of sextortion should not pay the ransom. They should instead try to live their normal lives while ignoring it.
[4] Note that this interpretation requires the mixing of several different translations, prioritizing some in the interpretation of *falā taqul lahumā uffin* (do not say so much as 'uff' to them/say no word that shows impatience with them). This isn't really an issue since all translations express the same idea, just that the exact words differ by translation: Muḥammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muḥammad Muhsin Khan, trans. *The Noble Qurʾān: English Translations of the meanings and commentary* (Madinah: King Fahd Glorious Qur'ān Printing Complex, 2015), 17:23–17:24; "Verse (17:23) - Word by Word," *Quranic Arabic Corpus Word by Word Grammar, Syntax and Morphology of the Holy Quran*, accessed September 8, 2024, https://corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp?chapter=17&verse=23.; "*Sūra* Al-Isra 17:23," *Quran.com*, accessed September 8, 2024, https://quran.com/17/23-24?translations=131%2C85%2C84%2C95%2C19%2C22%2C20%2C203%2C57.
[5] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 6–7; Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 13–14.
[6] Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 15–16.
[7] Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 17–18.
[8] Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 18–19.
[9] Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 2–3.
[10] Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 8–9, 12, 16, 112–113.
[11] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 3, 14.; Cynthia Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method: Developing Queer International Relations Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2016): p. 12, 15–16, 18–19, https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12212.
[12] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 3–4, 10–11.; Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 17–18.
[13] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 4.
[14] Note that in conventional orthodox International Relations, discourse usually takes a back seat to state actors, institutions, and economics. They have a tendency to presume that discourse is just something that reflects power in other domains (i.e.: a Presidential policy produces discourse justifying it). Post-structuralist International Relations focuses on how discourse itself has power that other domains reflect (i.e.: a moral panic produces laws appeasing it). The specifics of poststructuralism can be more complicated: Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 4.
[15] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 4–6.
[16] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 5.; Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 12.
[17] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 5–6, 10.; Weber, "Queer Intellectual Curiosity," p. 19–20.
[18] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 47–48, 55–56.

[19] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 49–51, 55, 73–75.
[20] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 54, 57–58.
[21] Note that this argument presumes that the most dominant systems of rearing children must reflect its superiority (because it is better at surviving than alternative systems): Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 61–64.
[22] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 64–66.
[23] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 90.
[24] Christoph N. Vogel, *Conflict Minerals, Inc.: War, Profit and White Saviourism in Eastern Congo* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 4–5, 18–19, 74, 78–79, 88–89.
[25] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 75–77, 96–99.
[26] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 53, 60–61, 72, 82–86.
[27] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 77, 91–98.
[28] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 61–64, 67–68.
[29] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 8–9, 105–106, 108–111, 122–123, 127–130.
[30] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 106–107, 113, 130–137.
[31] Janelle Raymundo, "The Burden of Excellence: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Perfectionism in Black Students," *The Vermont Connection* 42, no. 1 (2021): p. 110–111, 113–117, https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc/vol42/iss1/12.; Sofya Aptekar, "Why Immigrants Enlist in the U.S. Military," *The Reader: MIT Press*, July 27, 2023, https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-real-motivations-behind-immigrant-enlistment-in-the-u-s-military/.; Robert Smol, "Smol: Joining Canada's Military Is No Longer a 'Passport to Poverty,'" *Ottawa Citizen*, March 29, 2022, https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/smol-joining-canadas-military-is-no-longer-a-passport-to-poverty.; Camille Perri, "It's Not a Bad Time to Be Queer, If You're Rich and White," *New York Times*, June 19, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/camille-perri-queer-money.html.; Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan, "Why the Children of Immigrants Get Ahead," *Time*, June 1, 2022, https://time.com/6182715/immigrants-children-us-mobility.; Meredith A. Kleykamp, "College, Jobs, or the Military? Enlistment During a Time of War," *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (June 2006): p. 277–278, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00380.x.; Randy Besco and Erin Tolley, "12 Does Everyone Cheer? The Politics of Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada," in *Federalism and the Welfare State in a Multicultural World*, ed. Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, John Myles, Will Kymlicka, and Richard Johnston (School of Policy Studies & McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018). p. 302–305.
[32] Lisa Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 70–72, 130–132, 139.
[33] Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem*, p. 76–78, 107–118, 123–130.
[34] Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem*, p. 90–92, 95–100.
[35] Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem*, p. 20–22, 75, 127, 136–138, 146–147, 150–157, 160–166.
[36] Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem*, p. 20–22, 74–78, 127–134, 138–141, 145–147, 149–153, 168–169, 172–173, 184–194.
[37] David Uahikeaikalei'ohu Maile, "On Being Late: Cruising Mauna Kea and Unsettling Technoscientific Conquest in Hawai'i," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 45, no. 1 (2021): p. 97–100, 104–110, https://doi.org/10.17953/aicrj.45.1.maile.
[38] Shin Imai, Leah Gardner, and Sarah Weinberger, The 'Canada Brand': Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America, Osgoode Legal Studies Research Paper No. 17/2017 (December 1, 2017), p. 10–12, 14–22, 25, 91, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2886584 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2886584.; Simon Granovsky-Larsen and Larissa Santos, "From the War on Terror to a War on Territory: Corporate Counterinsurgency at the Escobal Mine and the Dakota Access Pipeline," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 46, no. 1 (2021): p. 126–131, 133, https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2021.1855892.; Pablo Heidrich and Laura Macdonald, "Introduction: Canada's Past and Future in the Americas," In *Canada's past and future in Latin America, ed. Pablo Heidrich and Laura Macdonald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022),* p. 3–4, 6–7, 14–15, 18–19, 23–24.
[39] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 114–115, 117–119.
[40] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 115–117, 119–120, 137–138, 141.
[41] Weber, *Queer International Relations*, p. 112–113, 139–140.
[42] Paul R. Magocsi, *This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars* (Toronto: Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Toronto, 2014), p. 5–6.; Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007), p. 41, 56, 58–59, 103, 132.; Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe, Me: Common Courage Press, 1993), p. 113–117, 136–137.

[43] Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, p. 67, 70–72, 225.; Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 48–93.; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 119, 124–133, 139, 143–146; Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez, Ch. 4 "Remembering Pearl Harbor, Reinforcing Vigilance," In *Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai'i and the Philippines* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 115–120, 131–142.; Noenoe K. Silva, Ch 4 "The Antiannexation Struggle," In *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 123–163.
[44] Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, p. 165–201.; Alan W. Fisher, *Between Russians, Ottomans, and Turks: Crimea and Crimean Tatars* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010), p. 126–128. Mara Kozelsky, *Crimea in War and Transformation* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 8, 11, 60, 62–63, 73.; Mustafa Cemiloglu, "5 A History of the Crimean Tatar National Liberation Movement: A Sociopolitical Perspective," In *Crimea--Dynamics, Challenges and Prospects* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), p 89.; Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question*, p. 74–75.; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 138–139, 142, 145; Gonzalez, "Remembering Pearl Harbor," p. 121–131, 142–145.
[45] Note that Trask requests people thinking of visiting Hawai'i to refrain from doing so since Hawaiians do not benefit from more tourism: Maile, "Technoscientific Conquest in Hawai'i," p. 105–107.; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, p. 139–140, 145–146.; Dean Itsuji Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 101–102, 143, 163.
[46] Maile, "Technoscientific Conquest in Hawai'i," p. 95–97, 113.
[47] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 5:90–91.
[48] For more on religious persecution in India and how trends point to upcoming overt genocide against its Muslim population, See: Areeka Khan, "Country Report: India," *Genocide Watch*, Apr 15, 2023, https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/country-report-india.; "Expert warns of impending 'genocide' of Muslims in India," *Al Jazeera*, Jan 16, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/16/expert-warns-of-possible-genocide-against-muslims-in-india.; Simran Jeet Singh and Gunisha Kaur, "Why India Is Targeting Sikhs At Home and Around the World," *Time*, Simran Jeet Singh and Gunisha Kaur, https://time.com/6342873/india-sikhs-persecution/.; Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400842599.
[49] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 30:21.
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[52] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 8:61, 60:6–8.
[53] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 7:182–185, 17:36–39, 29:20, 30:6–9.
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[56] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 3:195, 33:35, 49:13.
[57] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 96:1–2.; "Verse (96:1) - Word by Word," *Quranic Arabic Corpus*.
[58] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 4:34, 4:59, 4:65-66, 4:176, 8:55–60, 9:5, 16:22–25, 16:90, 17:23–24, 29:12–13.

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